American Latex Allergy Association

Letter from the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services
Public Health Service
Food and Drug Administration
2001 Food Code

3-304.15 Gloves, Use Limitation.

Refer to the public health reason for § 3-304.11.

Gloves used in touching ready-to-eat food are defined as a ?utensil? and must meet the applicable requirements related to utensil construction, good repair, cleaning, and storage.

Multiuse gloves, especially when used repeatedly and soiled, can become breeding grounds for pathogens that could be transferred to food. Soiled gloves can directly contaminate food if stored with ready-to-eat food or may indirectly contaminate food if stored with articles that will be used in contact with food. Multiuse gloves must be washed, rinsed, and sanitized between activities that contaminate the gloves. Hands must be washed before donning gloves. Gloves must be discarded when soil or other contaminants enter the inside of the glove.

Slash-resistant gloves are not easily cleaned and sanitized. Their use with ready-to-eat foods could contaminate the food.

Natural Latex Rubber (NRL) Gloves

Natural rubber latex gloves have been reported to cause allergic reactions in some individuals who wear latex gloves during food preparation, and even in individuals eating food prepared by food employees wearing latex gloves (refer to Annex 2, 3-304.15). This information should be taken into consideration when deciding whether single-use gloves made of latex will be used during food preparation.

Although many allergic reactions occur as a result of occupational exposure, CFSAN is actively reviewing its current policy on the use of disposable NLR gloves in food operations in light of the possible transmission of the latex protein via food. To gain additional information regarding allergic reactions allegedly due to the ingestion of food contaminated by NRL in retail settings, CFSAN has been collecting reports of such reactions from consumers who have contacted the Agency. Several offices within CFSAN will continue to collaborate in reviewing incoming data. The results of these activities and other related efforts will be used to determine if policy changes regarding the use of latex in food operations, based on food safety considerations, are warranted.

The FDA, Office of Premarket Approval, Indirect Additives, reviews gloves submitted for food-contact use in the food industry on the basis of the glove?s formulation or components.

FDA regulates NRL gloves used for medical purposes only.

FDA is aware of the following information related to occupational hazards (not food safety hazards) associated with the use of NRL gloves:

? The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) published a 1997 Alert titled ?Preventing Allergic Reactions to Natural Rubber Latex in the Workplace? (NIOSH publication number 97-135) which is found at **http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/latexalt.html** [1].

? The American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) and the American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI) issued a joint statement discouraging the routine use of NRL gloves by food handlers. (1997) **http://allergy.mcg.edu/physicians/joint.html** [2]

The AAAAI provides information on latex allergies on the web at **http://www.aaaai.org/public/fastfacts/latex.stm** [3]

The ACAAI provides information on latex allergies on the web at **http://allergy.mcg.edu/physicians/ltxhome.html** [4]

? An OSHA Technical Information Bulletin recommends reducing allergy potential by reducing unnecessary exposure to NRL. Stating ?Food service workers ? do not need to use NRL gloves for food handling?? (1999)

OSHA addresses gloves in the following federal regulation:

OSHA Regulations (Standards - 29 CFR)
Standard Number: 1910.138
Standard Title: Hand Protection.
SubPart Number: I
SubPart Title: Personal Protective Equipment

(a) General requirements. Employers shall select and require employees to use appropriate hand protection when employees? hands are exposed to hazards such as those from skin absorption of harmful substances; severe cuts or lacerations; severe abrasions; punctures; chemical burns; thermal burns; and harmful temperature extremes.

(b) Selection. Employers shall base the selection of the appropriate hand protection on an evaluation of the performance characteristics of the hand protection relative to the task(s) to be performed, conditions present, duration of use, and the hazards and potential hazards identified.

For further information on the OSHA requirements, see [59 FR 16362, April 6, 1994|.

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American Latex Allergy Association
P.O. Box 198
Slinger, WI 53086
Phone: 262-677-9707 1-888-97-ALERT
Website: www.latexallergyresources.org

Source URL: http://latexallergyresources.org/articles/letter-us-dept-health-and-human-services

Links:
[1] http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/latexalt.html
[2] http://allergy.mcg.edu/physicians/joint.html
[3] http://www.aaaai.org/public/fastfacts/latex.stm
[4] http://allergy.mcg.edu/physicians/ltxhome.html